

THE BRODIE CLUB



Established 1921

Website: <http://thebrodieclub.eeb.utoronto.ca>

The Field Day and picnic was held at the Toronto Zoo on Saturday, 25 June, 2016. We were hosted by Bill Rapley, with help from several staff and volunteers throughout the day.

While enjoying coffee and muffins we met a Bald Eagle and Spectacled Owl that star in many an educational talk. Bill gave an overview of programs in the Division of Conservation, Education and Wildlife, for which nearly half the 275 zoo employees work. While the number and range of programs is impressively broad, a core objective is enabling reintroduction of species to the wild. This requires successful maintenance and breeding of healthy captives, which in itself requires a lot of basic research.

We saw a few components of this work, first being shown the reptile hospital and breeding area where Blanding's turtles and Massasauga rattlesnakes are being raised for reintroduction in Ontario. At the Nutrition Centre we saw how meal packets are prepared for each day's feeding: fresh produce, dried food pellets, fish, meat, and various supplements. Meat mixtures are mostly horsemeat, initially because it was cheap but later because it was found to be most nutritious. Live vertebrate prey are not provided to carnivores although they sometimes get whole carcasses to tear apart. Instead of being provided in bowls, food is presented in ways that cater to natural behavior, so an animal has to find hidden food, dig it up, pull it down, fish it out of water, or even chase down a lure. We were told about a recent study on browse, in which the nutritional value of leaves, twigs and bark was determined for the first time. While browse was provided in the past primarily to give the browsers something to do and to promote healthy teeth, this study found that browse leads to healthier HDL levels in its consumers.

After introductory presentations, Bill and a volunteer led a group of walkers while staff drove others to the Americas domain. An animal keeper gave a daily talk at the Polar bear area while adult bears moved easily through the water snatching up frozen fish. In an adjacent pool, the polar bear cub, Juno, was entertaining himself with some 'toys.' Rapley explained that the wolves on display were 4-5 years of age; two females and one male. They had made a den in the spring but produced no offspring. These younger animals were replacing some 14-15 year-old wolves. Also in this domain was an injured male Snowy Owl, trying to keep cool in some shade, and some European Reindeer.

Our second stop was the African Savanna where we observed White lions, Cheetahs, African penguins and other species. Three Cheetahs chased a lure the length of a long track, earning their meal at the end in lieu of being allowed an actual hunt. The original 12 African penguins have multiplied so there are now about 30. There are about 300-400 of this species in captivity and 18,000 in the African wild. They are a "good" penguin for zoos as they are smaller and quite adaptable.

We had originally planned to visit to Weston Pond in the less developed part of the zoo, and to eat our lunch there. However, this was cancelled as there had been some construction and the water level was very low. Total rainfall for this May and June combined has been 55 mm; less than half the average amount (122 mm) and some vegetation is very stressed. It was also a hot, sunny day (28°), so the hike would have stressed us as well. We therefore lunched in the shade at the Simba restaurant where we could watch zebras and rhinos.

The afternoon included visits to the African exhibits, the Indo-Malaysian pavilion and a tour of Australasia, including a butterfly breeding area. The finale was a stop to see the Giant Pandas.

Although the exotic animals were highlights of the day, we also observed some native flora and fauna. Milkweed were in bud but not open, service berries were turning red and being enjoyed by robins. Large numbers of locust were in full bloom. Many members commented on the dense stands of Dog-strangling vine that have taken over in a few areas of the grounds.

Bill gave us access to a behind the scenes look that few are able to experience. He also planned a great tour to be at key locations at feeding times. Our very sincere thanks to him and also to Kevin Kerr, Andrew Lentini and several excellent volunteers who worked with our group.



Left to right. *Seated:* Bruce and Ann Falls, Kathryn Falls (guest of Falls), Ed Addison, David Tomlinson. *Standing:* Roy Colalillo (guest of Falls), Ken Reading, Bill Rapley, Kevin Seymour, Hugh Currie, Glenn Coady, Dierdre Tomlinson, Ricky Dunn, Steve La Forest, Greg Stuart (guest of Seymour), Victoria Carley, Carolyn King, John Carley, Richard Aaron (guest of Pittaway), Peggy Haist (guest of Bertin), Oliver Bertin, Rose Addison, Ron Pittaway, Jeremy Hussell. Missing from photo: Jim and Trudy Rising and their guest Mary Kay Winter, and Ken Reading's guest.

Glenn Coady compiled the attached list of birds, and Carolyn King provided the other sightings. Photos taken by Jeremy Hussell and Glenn Coady. Notes were put together by Rose Addison and Ricky Dunn.

Birds:

American Black Duck
Mallard
Turkey Vulture
Red-tailed Hawk
Killdeer
Ring-billed Gull
Herring Gull
Rock Pigeon
Belted Kingfisher
Downy
Woodpecker
Northern Flicker

Eastern Kingbird
Warbling Vireo
Red-eyed Vireo
Blue Jay
American Crow
Tree Swallow
Barn Swallow
Black-capped Chickadee
Red-breasted Nuthatch
House Wren
American Robin

Gray Catbird
Brown Thrasher
European Starling
Cedar Waxwing (including one on a nest)
Yellow Warbler
American Redstart
Chipping Sparrow
Song Sparrow
Northern Cardinal
Rose-breasted Grosbeak

Indigo Bunting
Red-winged Blackbird
Common Grackle
Brown-headed Cowbird
Baltimore Oriole
House Finch
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow

Butterflies:

Tiger Swallowtail
Cabbage White
Orange Sulphur
White Admiral

Odonates:

Ebony Jewelwing
Black Saddlebags
Common Whitetail

Other sightings:

Spider (*Araneus thaddeus*?)
Woodchuck
Eastern Chipmunk
Green Frog



Congratulations to Carolyn King and Steve La Forest on their very recent marriage!



Spectacled Owl, Nutrition Centre, Hospital and Breeding Lab (Steve La Forest, Trudy Rising, Oliver Bertin, Mary Kay Winter, Roy Colalillo, Bruce & Ann Falls, Ken Reading)





Left to right: Student explaining browse study, Richard Aaron (mostly hidden) Jim & Trudy Rising, Nutrition Centre employee, Oliver Bertin, David Tomlinson, Jeremy Hussell, Deirdre Tomlinson, Ricky Dunn (mostly hidden), Kathryn Falls, Roy Colalillo, Ann & Bruce Falls, Hugh



A collage of zoo animals: Rhinoceros, Panda cub, Wombat, Lion, Butterfly on Banyan tree, Komodo dragon, Golden-breasted (Royal) Starling, Cheetah, Polar Bear cub

